

# Baseline Use of the VLE

Course templates, consistency and the student experience

## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Baseline use of Learning Edge.....	3
Course Templates .....	4
Menu Structures .....	4
In-context Help.....	5
Programme Area Structure & Baseline Content .....	6
Module Area Structure & Baseline Content .....	7
Other Sources of Help and support for Staff.....	8

## Introduction

Student satisfaction with Learning Edge (Edge Hill's VLE) is extremely positive, with 91.7% of students responding to the *2014-15 Students eLearning Survey*<sup>1</sup> agreeing/strongly agreeing that it enables them to learn at a time and place of their own choosing, and 83.9% agreeing/strongly agreeing that it enhances the knowledge and understanding that they get from lectures, tutorials and practical sessions.

However feedback tells us that many still find it disorganised and difficult to navigate at times.

Thus, to improve the consistency of student experience across programmes of study staff are encouraged to:

1. Standardise the Blackboard course delivery structure, providing all students with separate 'Programme' and 'Module' course spaces.
2. Work with universal Blackboard 'Programme' and 'Module' course templates, providing all students with consistent terminology and organisation of baseline content.

This document provides information about the baseline and the course templates to help administrative and teaching staff to make effective use of the VLE and meet student expectations.

---

<sup>1</sup> 6th EHU Student eLearning Survey [http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/9894/1/2014-15\\_student\\_elearning\\_survey.pdf](http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/9894/1/2014-15_student_elearning_survey.pdf)

## Baseline use of Learning Edge

All programmes and modules have a virtual learning environment (VLE) presence within Learning Edge and the [Baseline Framework](#) establishes the minimum standards required to meet student expectations, ensuring:

- Consistent course structure and navigation;
- Consistent content location and format, and suitable for a range of devices;
- Announcements are used for urgent course communications;
- Materials are made available in a timely manner;
- Clear guidance for electronic submission, assessment and feedback.

The baseline framework is underpinned by the following principles:

- The Baseline is mandatory – Baseline+ and ++ are purely indicative, drawing upon existing good practice within the University and the wider HE sector;
- Course development in the VLE should be based upon sustainable academic practices – courses and teaching content in Blackboard should be developed and ‘owned’ by academic colleagues and not routinely delegated to others.
- By making no reference to pedagogy, the Baseline framework recognises that the pedagogic expert is the individual practitioner – but it is hoped that the document will spark conversations, innovations and multi-professional approaches with learning technologists, media developers and information specialists.
- The Baseline will continue to evolve in response to feedback from staff and students, to strategic initiatives, and improvements or developments in software and systems.

Learning Edge Baseline and Baseline+ (updated 7 <sup>th</sup> December 2015)				Edge Hill University
Categories	Baseline	Baseline+ (Indicative)	Baseline++ (Indicative)	
Administration and Orientation	Programme and/or Module handbook (depending on area) (PDF format for mobile and operating system accessibility– see also Resources below) Link to timetables	Staff contact details including photograph, availability, contact information Use Calendar tool	Tutors talking head video introductions <sup>1</sup>	
Structure and Navigation	Page items presented in a logical structure and sequence (usually chronological) Links checked to ensure still live. Broken links updated or removed	Faculty, Departmental or Programme templates used for consistency	Students guided through course by timed release of content	
Communication	Announcements tool for urgent information updates e.g. room changes, cancellations (one way)	Q&A Discussion fora provided for 2-way communication. Purpose of fora and how to engage is provided	News panel displayed on VLE home page owned and managed by Faculty or Department. Provides local, non-urgent information <sup>2</sup>	
Resources	Preparatory materials available up to 1 week before session. Presentation slides, notes, hand-outs available via the VLE within 1 week of session. Cross-platform and mobile-accessible PDF format used unless documents need to be accessed for editing Support learners with additional requirements by making alternative resources i.e. transcripts for videos (if used) and use of colour contrast, font and text size in content <sup>3</sup>	Compress files to minimise file size and aid students viewing on mobile devices. File size and type displayed alongside the filename e.g. Introduction to infection control 34MB PDF 68KB Teaching content in presentation software, e.g. PowerPoint enhanced by multimedia/ narration/ quiz functionality e.g. via iSpring plugin. Renders on any device (and mobile accessible) Allow students to revisit lectures using lecture capture streamed via the VLE Use webcam or personal screen/desktop capture software to produce audio/video e.g. to highlight key concepts to students in any given topic	Bespoke content that requires specialist skills e.g. simulations, games, videos <sup>4</sup> , interactive resources Videos, links, images and texts display well on mobile devices including smartphones Activities specifically designed to harness mobile device features (e.g. camera, apps) to aid ‘anytime, anyplace learning’	

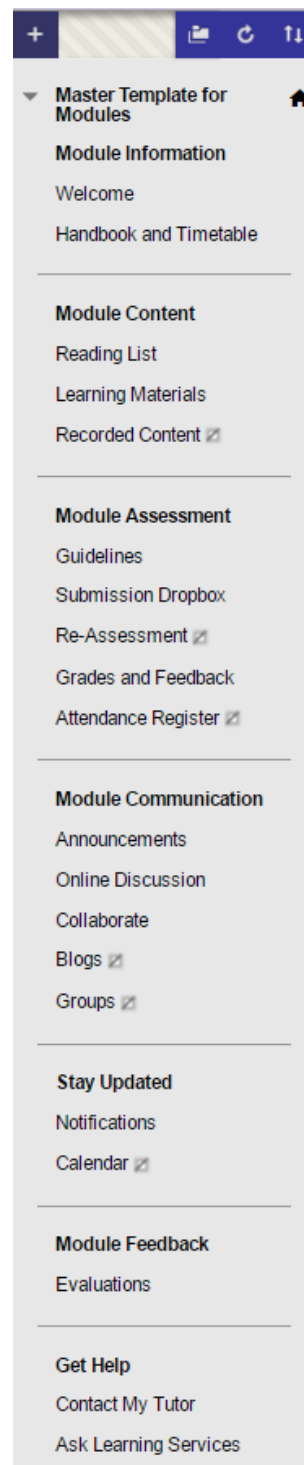
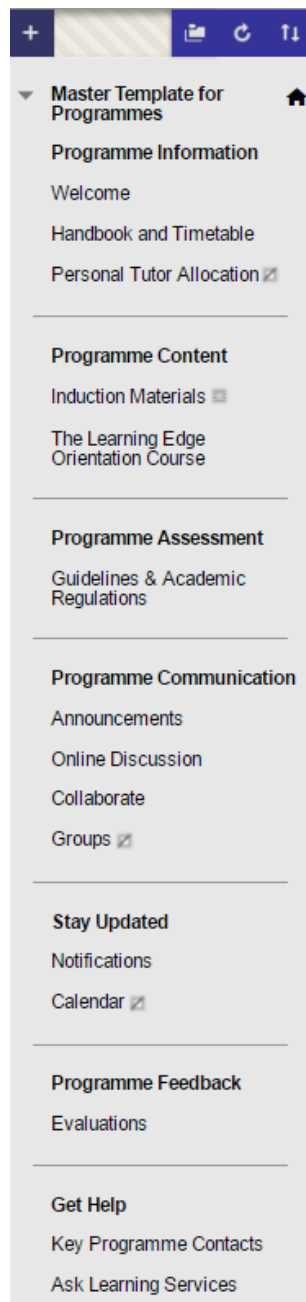
<sup>1</sup> For example, could be self-produced by webcam or commissioned from Learning Services Media Development team  
<sup>2</sup> Part of Learning Services LTD development activity, working with Faculties/Departments between now and next academic year. Will move to baseline+ then baseline once rolled out.  
<sup>3</sup> Accessible documents and presentations: <http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis/resources/accessdocpres>  
<sup>4</sup> Role of LS Media Development –providers of video content that academics cannot be expected to build for themselves.

## Course Templates

University course templates for Programme and Module areas have been developed to help ensure equity of provision and consistency for all students. The templates are aligned with the baseline and offer a starting point for organising learning, teaching and assessment materials. They are not intended to replace or limit existing good practice, or creative and innovative use of Learning Edge.

## Menu Structures

The templates contain pre-populated menus to ensure key folders and tools are available and organised consistently. e.g.




## In-context Help

Advice on what to include is available within the course templates, as hidden items that only teaching staff can see. e.g.

### Welcome

Build Content ▾ Assessments ▾ Tools ▾

 **Information for Instructors**

Availability: Item is not available.

**Hidden items, like this one, have been included to provide you with a quick guide to sharing learning materials with your students in line with the University baseline.**

The Edge Hill University [baseline framework](#) establishes the minimum standards expected of taught courses with a VLE presence, to meet student expectations, ensuring:

- Consistent course structure and navigation;
- Consistent content location and format, and suitable for a range of devices;
- Announcements are used for urgent course communications;
- Materials are made available in a timely manner;
- Clear guidance for electronic submission, assessment and feedback.

The organisation of this module follows an agreed University template and provides a starting point for your module area. To ensure cross-module consistency, please do not rename or reorder the items listed in the main menu.

**What to add to this content folder?**

**Baseline**


- A welcome message offering an overview/introduction to the module.

**Baseline +/++**

- An embedded 'talking head' video message offering an overview/introduction to the module.
- A visual banner image to the module information homepage.

### Handbook and Timetable

Build Content ▾ Assessments ▾ Tools ▾

 **Information for Instructors**

Availability: Item is not available.

**Hidden items, like this one, have been included to provide you with a quick guide to sharing learning materials with your students in line with the University baseline.**

**What to add to this content folder?**

**Baseline**


- A Module Handbook - Provide .pdf files to ensure mobile and operating system accessibility. Upload a file or link to a file hosted on [eShare](#).
- A Module Timetable - Provide a .pdf file or link to the university [timetable finder system](#).

**Baseline +/++**

- Enable 'Review Status' so your students can make a note of the documents and links they have looked at, to help them keep on track.
- Enable 'Statistics Tracking' so you can see what your students are looking at and when.

### Learning Materials

Build Content ▾ Assessments ▾ Tools ▾

 **Information for Instructors**

Availability: Item is not available.

**Hidden items, like this one, have been included to provide you with a quick guide to sharing learning materials with your students in line with the University baseline.**

**What to add to this content folder?**

**Baseline**





- Preparatory materials (such as presentation slides, notes, hand-outs, etc.) to help students make the most of their lectures, seminars and tutorials - link to .pdf files hosted on [eShare](#).
- Organise the content you add logically - usually chronologically in content folders, e.g. 'Week 1 - Topic A', 'Week 2 - Topic B'.
- Avoid using generic names when linking to resources or activities. e.g. 'Lecture 1 - Introduction to Critical Thinking' rather than simply 'Lecture 1'.


**Baseline +/++**

- Enhanced teaching content and learning activities that help your students to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

## **Programme Area Structure & Baseline Content**







Online programme areas should be dynamic, dependable places for students to access programme level information and actively engage in programme wide activity. e.g.


Menu Item	Content	Source
<b>Programme Information</b>		
Welcome	Programme overview and introduction	Instructor
Handbook and Timetable	Handbook and timetable	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
Personal Tutor Allocation 	Personal tutor details	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
<b>Programme Content</b>		
Induction Materials	Information and resources to support student transition	Instructor
The Learning Edge Orientation Course	An introduction to Learning Edge course area - providing students with generic advice on navigating the environment, using key tools and the Blackboard mobile apps	Automated
<b>Programme Assessment</b>		
Guidelines & Academic Regulations	Programme assessments overview & academic regulations	Instructor
<b>Programme Communication</b>		
Announcements	Programme related announcements	Instructor
Online Discussion	General discussion forum	Instructor/ Student
	Other forums 	Instructor/ Student
Collaborate	Online classroom tool	Automated
Groups 	Study/communication groups	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
<b>Stay Updated</b>		
Notifications	My Announcements: module related announcements.	Instructor
	What's New: changes to course content (e.g. new assignments, tests, surveys, grades, etc.)	Automated (via Instructor activity)
Calendar 	Bb Calendars	Instructor/ Student
<b>Programme Feedback</b>		
Evaluations	Information about when, why and how to provide programme and module feedback	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
	External examiner reports	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
	Student staff consultative forum (SSCF) reports	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
<b>Get Help</b>		
Key Programme Contacts	Staff profiles and contact details	Instructor
Ask Learning Services	Helpdesk service	Automated

 These items are hidden in the template – course teams can make them visible as desired.

## **Module Area Structure & Baseline Content**

Online module areas should be dynamic, dependable places for students to access module level information and actively engage in module activity. e.g.

<b>Menu Item</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Module Information</b>		
Welcome	Module overview and introduction	Instructor
Handbook and Timetable	Handbook and timetable	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
<b>Module Content</b>		
Reading List	Module reading list (Rebus:List)	Instructor
Learning Materials	Preparatory materials - inc. presentation slides, notes, hand-outs, etc. (eShare)	Instructor
Recorded Content	Recorded lectures, talking head videos, screencast tutorials, etc. (Panopto)	Instructor
<b>Module Assessment</b>		
Guidelines	Module assessments overview and academic guidance	Instructor
Submission Dropbox	Blackboard and/or Turnitin assignment dropboxes, with instructions and technical support	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
Re-Assessment 	Blackboard and/or Turnitin assignment dropboxes, with instructions and technical support for re-assessment	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
Grades and Feedback	Student view of visible gradebook columns	Instructor (via Gradebook)
Attendance Register 	Qwickly Attendance tracker	Instructor
<b>Module Communication</b>		
Announcements	Module related announcements	Instructor
Online Discussion	General discussion forum	Instructor/ Student
	Other forums 	Instructor/ Student
Collaborate	Online classroom tool	Automated
Blogs 	Individual or shared blogs	Instructor/ Student
Groups 	Study/communication groups	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
<b>Stay Updated</b>		
Notifications	My Announcements: module related announcements.	Instructor
	What's New: changes to course content (e.g. new assignments, tests, surveys, grades, etc.)	Automated (via Instructor activity)
	My Tasks: module tasks set by the Instructor. Each task has a status and due date.	Instructor
	To Do: Information about tests, assignments, or surveys with a due date.	Automated (via Instructor activity)
Calendar 	Bb Calendars	Instructor/ Student
<b>Module Feedback</b>		
Evaluations	Mid-module and end of module evaluations (BOS)	Instructor/ Faculty Admin
<b>Get Help</b>		
Contact My Tutor	Staff profiles and contact details	Instructor
Ask Learning Services	Helpdesk service	Automated

 These items are hidden in the template – course teams can make them visible as desired.



## Other Sources of Help and support for Staff

---

### Learning Technology Development

Staff within the Learning Technology Development division are available to work with individuals and teams to help them meet and exceed the baseline. Please contact your Learning Technologist, or the main office, to discuss your support needs:

**Email:** [ltdsupport@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:ltdsupport@edgehill.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** 01695 650754

**Team Contacts:** [Learning Technology Development Division Contacts](#)